

Andrew Saintsing: Hi, you're tuned in to 90.7 FM KALX Berkeley. I'm Andrew Saintsing...

Daniella Lake: ...and I'm Daniella Lake.

Saintsing: And we're the hosts of The Graduates, the interview talk show where we speak to UC Berkeley graduate students about their work here on campus and around the world. Today, we don't have a guest. I am actually going to spend my time talking to Daniella. Daniella is an undergraduate here at Berkeley, but she's interested in getting involved in The Graduates and becoming a host. And so, I want to spend some time asking her some questions, getting to know her experience in podcasting, and then after that we'll spend some time letting you see how Daniella might be as a host, and she'll do some interviewing of me. And that will be our show today. I'm excited. How are you feeling about it, Daniella?

Lake: I'm really excited, too. I'm happy to be here.

Saintsing: So happy to have you here. It's always great to have a new host involved and maybe it lessens the load a little bit for me. So, how's your time at Berkeley been? I guess you're a sophomore, so really you have been at college in COVID-times exclusively. Is that right?

Lake: Yes, it's been interesting. Yeah, my first year — last year — was entirely online. I did come here to live in the dorms for a little bit, but then I ended up leaving after like two months just because of the isolation. And now, I'm here for real this time, and I've been having a really good time. I really like the campus, and I feel like everyone's really friendly. So, it's been great.

Saintsing: That's great. Have there been like many chances to interact in person this semester?

Lake: Yes, I am taking three classes and two of them are in person, and they've been a really great way just to feel connected to the campus community and also just to feel grounded here. Going to class and interacting with my classmates and professors always makes me feel better and always brightens my day. So, that's been really great. And then I've also joined like different clubs. I actually recently joined ballroom dancing and that's been really fun.

Saintsing: Does it happen outside — the ballroom dancing?

Lake: It's inside. Yeah, it's inside in like a room they use for other dance classes and stuff.

Saintsing: That's super cool that you can actually do dancing and things inside now. Masked, though?

Lake: Yeah, but it's not too bad because it's not like super intense, not like you have to do a ton of calisthenics or anything. But yeah being on campus has been really nice. Like when I

first, you know, moved in for the semester I was a little overwhelmed because it was such a big change, you know? Because it's like: one, it's a big life change to, you know, be in college. And then also just adjusting to being in person, you know? It's kind of like a double change. So, yeah, the first week I was quite overwhelmed, but then I adjusted pretty quickly.

Saintsing: That's great. You finished high school during COVID?

Lake: Yes, Class of 2020.

Saintsing: How was that? Was that really weird?

Lake: Yeah, I mean it was so sudden how, you know... I'm just thinking about that last day when we were in school, and we didn't know that would be our last time like, you know, in high school in person. And I mean honestly it happened right around the time when I was feeling quite burned out and like senioritis was in full swing, so it actually gave me a lot of time to like rest and slow down, which I had been craving anyways. So, that was, you know, nice in that way. But yeah, we didn't have a prom. Our graduation was supposed to happen at the end of May, but it got pushed back to August because they thought they would be able to do it in person in August. Because, you know, at the time we thought that the pandemic was like a short-term thing. Don't know why we thought that. But yeah, so we graduated in August, and it was like semi-in-person. Like, they separated everyone into groups by last name, and you, like, would go up on the stage (everyone was masked) and, yeah, get your diploma. And they did a really good job, you know. I'm really grateful that they wanted to do something nice for us because they knew how important it was for us to have that symbol of like completion. So yeah, it's been a crazy two years. I can't believe any of it's real to be honest.

Saintsing: Dang. That's such a... it's so weird to have that happen during such a formative part of your life. I guess... Do you have a deeper appreciation for all things uh that happened before COVID now?

Lake: Yeah, I mean I think, too, just moving forward, I'm definitely going to just move through life with a lot of gratitude, you know, because there's so much we took for granted. And like one thing that was good for me over the pandemic — I mean we're still in the pandemic, but you know when we were really quarantined — was my family got really, really close. And so, that's something I want to hold on to. And just realizing all the little things that make life great. I think that's why I feel so joyful being here and being in person, you know? Because it's like we just had a whole year of isolation.

Saintsing: Yeah, for sure. I think, yeah, I mean regardless of what point in your life that the pandemic struck, I hope that's like what how everyone feels. I definitely feel more grateful for in-person things now. So, what are you doing now in college? What are you majoring in?

Lake: So, I'm studying Media Studies. I'm interested in journalism, which is why I'm here with you and podcasting, because I started a podcast when I was in high school, when I was 15. And I've just been in love with storytelling and hearing people's stories and all of that. So yeah, Berkeley doesn't have a journalism major, so Media Studies was like, you know, the closest thing. And then, I hope to go to grad school for journalism.

Saintsing: Right. Okay, you started a podcast when you're 15? We gotta hear more about that. What was the podcast?

Lake: So, it's called *Life Told by a Stranger*, and it's on Apple Podcast and Spotify and wherever you get your podcast. And basically, in it I meet with people from all walks of life, you know, different occupations, different ages, different cultural backgrounds, and I ask them all the same four questions about life. So for example, the first question I asked them is: If you were to write an autobiography, what is one story you would have to include? That gets a lot of amazing answers, and then, like the last question I asked them is: What's the greatest piece of advice you have to offer? So, I've just learned so much about so many people. And like, it's been really nice to you know learn about life from people who are so different than me. And like, you know they have experiences that I'll never have. And so, it's been great to learn from their life.

Saintsing: Yeah, for sure. Okay, you ask the same four questions. Do you just like ask the question and then... I'm so interested to know, you know, like what the... how different it's been like getting the response? Or is there... Are there people who are just like, "Uh..." And then, there are people that are like, "Oh, yeah. I got this."

Lake: Yeah, so like in the beginning, I asked like some basic just get to know you questions, just so the audience can get an idea of who they are. You know, like where they grew up, what's their occupation. And then, I dive into the big four. And most people, I would say, most people have a lot to say. Because I think people really enjoy the chance to tell their story, but there have been people who have shorter answers. I think because they're a little bit nervous, you know? And it's so funny because for my third question (which is: Putting aside money, fear, and insecurity, what is one thing you would love to do if there were no stakes and you had all the freedom in the world?) And for that question, I get a lot of repeat answers. A lot of people say they want to travel, which makes sense. So, sometimes I tell people beforehand like, "Oh, just letting you know, for this question a lot of people say travel. So, like, if you have any other ideas..." But yeah, everyone who's been on it has been really, really great. Lots of interesting answers, things you wouldn't expect.

Saintsing: Yeah, what kinds of people do you talk to? Like how do you identify people for the show?

Lake: Well, starting with the first season, since I was really young, I didn't want to have like complete strangers, you know? So, I had people in my community that I knew or knew of. So, people who I knew from working and volunteering at my local library. People who went to church with me. So, members of my community that I knew. And then, by the time I reached the third season, that's when I started to have like actual strangers, like friends of friends, you know? Someone tells me, "Oh, I have this person I went to college with who's doing like cool stuff right now, or they own a business now, and I think they would be great to be on your podcast." So, that's when I started to like branch out more as I got older.

Saintsing: And did you try to like identify people who you thought would be like, would have interesting life stories? Or were you just kind of like anybody come on and maybe you will find the interesting story in the people or from the people who you wouldn't necessarily expect it from?

Lake: Yes, so it was more like, I just want to hear anyone's story because I'm sure they have something interesting to say. And they all did. There are people who, you know, like they seem like ordinary people, and then I ask them these questions, and I'm just in awe of like the life they've lived and the things they've learned. And you know, I've had a few people here and there who I know them personally as really good storytellers.

Saintsing: Yeah, what's your favorite thing that you've heard you heard in the podcast?

Lake: My favorite thing would have to be an episode called "A Call from Thailand." And that features a woman named Patty Kelsey, who... She's known me basically my whole life through church, and she's an amazing storyteller. She was also in the Halloween episode. I had a special Halloween episode that was like completely different than the others. It was called "Sleep Tight." And she was just telling me all these scary stories and things she's seen and experienced. And so that was really fun, but in "A Call from Thailand," she tells a story of her dad, who's from Thailand, and was telling the story about his mother and... I don't even want to spoil it because it's just so good, so I highly recommend going and listening to it because there's a big plot twist, and she's just an amazing storyteller. So, it was really easy working with her. I just had to add dramatic music to make it more dramatic, but she already did most of that just through her storytelling skills.

Saintsing: Wow, that sounds really cool. I'm gonna check that out. I'm really interested now. Cool, and then, so I'm interested to know what you want to do. So, you're interested in journalism. Where do you see your career going after maybe you get the journalism degree in graduate school? What would you like to do?

Lake: My goal is NPR. I love all of their work, and yeah. Although I like writing and you know like written journalism and newspapers and articles and stuff, I do think I enjoy speaking

more and just how you can tell stories through audio. So, NPR would be like the top, the top goal.

Saintsing: Yeah, for sure. And also, you know, radio... I mean this maybe isn't very scripted, but I just tried to do an episode with my lab away from lab. I have a lab, but then I also have a lab I spend a lot of time with, and I did an episode of us in the field. And the more you try to like do stuff off the cuff, narrating things, you realize: I really need to write this down to actually like make it good and logical. So, that's all to say: Writing is definitely part of radio journalism, I think, depending on the kind of show you're doing. So, you can do both.

Lake: Yeah, so i'm really really looking forward to that and just storytelling in general. It's really, really fun.

Saintsing: Yeah, we're excited to see how you do on this show and where you go afterwards.

Lake: Yeah, thank you. And I have some questions for you. I want to know more about your journey with The Graduates. And you have been here since it started, right?

Saintsing: The Graduates? Oh, actually, so I got here in the Fall of 2017. That's when I started my PhD, and in that year, the previous host Tesla Monson was finishing up her postdoc and leaving Berkeley. And she sent out an email to our department, Integrative Biology, because she wanted somebody to keep the show going. She really enjoyed it as part of her grad school, postdoc career. And so, she wanted to make sure it didn't end with her. So, I was one of the people that responded, and yeah, I've been doing it since then.

Lake: Wow, that's awesome. And how have you felt like... What has been your favorite part of interviewing other graduate students?

Saintsing: It's just really interesting to learn what other people are doing and to just talk to people. My favorite part of The Graduates is definitely the conversations. You know, editing is like kind of a pain, and other things like that are kind of a pain, but I keep doing it because I love talking to all the other grad students that I've talked to. I don't think... Yeah, I don't think I've ever had a bad interview. I don't think I've not enjoyed talking to any of the guests that I've had.

Lake: So, tell us more about what you're studying and what you hope to do after graduation.

Saintsing: Yeah, so I study cockroaches. I make them run on treadmills and then I measure how much they breathe when they're running. And then I change things up on them. So, my main focus is seeing what happens when you remove some of their legs, seeing how that changes the cost of running in terms of like oxygen they consume. So, that's kind of what my research is. And in terms of after I'm really interested, I've really enjoyed like The Graduates and some writing opportunities I've had. Berkeley has this great science

magazine that's run by grad students called the Berkeley Science Review, and I've had a chance to work on that as well. And I've had some other writing opportunities. So, I really enjoy... I really enjoyed all these communications, media opportunities, and so, hopefully after I graduate (fingers crossed in the spring — maybe I don't want to say that just in case it doesn't happen — but fingers crossed in the spring) I will pursue some science communication opportunities. Whether that's writing, audio. It'd be really cool to even try out some like documentary type stuff. But yeah, something in science communications is my next step.

Lake: Yeah, that's really cool, and you know there's a lot of like science like podcasts like really big ones. And those are all really cool. I think it's a really great way to educate people, you know, because you just remember things better and understand them when there's that element of storytelling in it. So yeah, you do a lot of great work.

Saintsing: And yeah, I definitely agree with that. I think another thing that's great about The Graduates and something I've tried to do when I've written articles is also establishing that like human side of it. So like, you know, I think a lot of times with science people just kind of read, you know like: The cockroach ran, and then we cut off a leg, and then it ran, and it consumed more oxygen. Right? But you know, I think like having the story where it's like: Yeah, I was like trying to put the cockroach in, and then like it was really fast and it got away, and then I had to spend like five minutes trying to get it and then put it actually in the treadmill respirometer. You know, just having that like whole side of what it actually looked like to do the science and how you know it felt for that person to do the science and establishing that human connection also really helps people, you know, not roll their eyes back in their head when you start talking about science. That's kind of what I try to do not only with science, but with all the people who I interview. You know I talk to humanities people, social sciences. So, human side of things is always a good plus.

Lake: Yeah, definitely. And how have you felt with the pandemic and how it's affected you and your studies here?

Saintsing: Yeah, so I mean early on, right, like when it first went into effect, like when the shutdowns happened in April, you know, you couldn't come to campus unless you had something, some reason like animal care or something. So, for a stretch there I was definitely, you know, kept from doing any data collection or anything like that. But then like pretty quickly, I think in late summer they started back up research. So, most science research could happen again by like August, and actually I think I've done, I've accomplished a lot more, you know? I mean I don't know if that's because I am later in my grad school career, and I just have a better understanding of what I need to do and when. Like data collection during last spring was pretty easy maybe because there weren't a lot of people around on campus, and you know teaching was relatively lighter because it was all over zoom, and I could just you know... Like I didn't have to get between places and deal with things in person. So, yeah it's tough to say, you know, if it's

like a natural progression from the start of grad school to now, versus like having that change due to the pandemic, but I've definitely accomplished more, I feel like, in the last year, two years, than I did before. And that was all the time before the pandemic struck.

Lake: Yeah, that's one thing I've noticed, too, is like things actually take a lot of a lot more time when they're in person, you know? Because you have to factor in transportation and things like that. So, you know sometimes it does feel that like when you're home or when everything's on zoom, you kind of get more done.

Saintsing: Yeah, it's also, you know, it's like way better to be in person though from another. Yeah, I've definitely like enjoyed actually this semester going to you know meetings and talks in person, but yeah. And from the talks like standpoint, I don't know if I've ever really fully paid attention to a zoom talk. So, it's also much better to have that, but yeah, like in terms of me getting my own personal things done, I think yeah, like you said, it's good to have things kind of virtual because it's just easier.

Lake: So, with your last semester coming up, or probably your last semester?

Saintsing: Right, hopefully.

Lake: What's something you're looking forward to?

Saintsing: In my last semester or after my last semester?

Lake: In your last semester.

Saintsing: It's been nice actually putting together the dissertation and like having the story more cohesive and seeing results that work together. So, I am excited to, in some ways, just kind of be done with it, but in other ways, like actually see it when it's done. So I'm, yeah, looking forward to getting things down on the page and having a full story for my dissertation, you know? And then, I really want to try to do a couple more... I really enjoyed that interview, that episode that I was talking about with the Williams lab, my lab away from lab. So, I'm interested in trying to do more creatively challenging Graduates episodes before I go. So, that'll be something fun. We'll see. I don't know. There's only so much time in a day. The dissertation... I don't know how much else I'll get done, but yeah, those are a couple of things that I'm really looking forward to.

Lake: That's great. How long does the dissertation have to be?

Saintsing: Man. That's a question I should know the answer to. In general, you know, like I think there's a lot more about page lengths and or page... Yeah, a number of pages, for like humanities and stuff. In general, science programs you need to have like three chapters, so a chapter is basically something that you could say is one, whole, standalone experiment. So, you need to be able to have three of those, and they kind of need to be

like thematically linked. So, you know, like my chapters are looking at what happens when you remove legs, and then seeing what happens when you add in some terrain variation. How does that affect things? And then seeing what happens when you remove legs from different species of cockroaches? So, all like thematically linked, but you know, you could argue that those are three distinct chapters that you could publish separately. And so, that's really like the what you need to think about in terms of the length of it, I guess. In like having those three distinct sections. But I think they mostly come out to like 100 pages, but that's also including like a page for a figure, you know? What I mean: so like, you have like a whole page devoted to a graph and you have many graphs hopefully. And you know, you have pages of references.

Lake: So, good luck on that. And also, most importantly, why cockroaches?

Saintsing: Uh, yeah, my lab, the Full lab (my advisor's Bob Full) is, historically has looked at cockroaches. So, my advisor did his work early on when he was in grad school with cockroaches. So, we just have this kind of legacy. I didn't start grad school thinking like, "I'm gonna go study cockroaches." It kind of organically came up. But then in terms of like "Why would anybody study cockroaches?" I am studying locomotion. So, from that point of view cockroaches are pretty nice because they like to run. You know, you can see them scurrying around, so they are a good model for what I'm looking at. And then they're really easy like to take care of. Honestly, you know, you just have them in a bin, give them some dog food, give them some water, they're happy, low maintenance. So, when you think about a research organism or, yeah, a research organism you kind of think about: Do they do the thing you want them to do? And you know, what's the upkeep like? Can you (you know, and you want to like kind of minimize like costs, you know, hurdles, or hoops you have to jump through). For like, you know, if you worked with vertebrates, for instance, like mice and other things with backbones, you have to like deal with a whole other review board who's going to decide like how humane your research is. And so, when you work with invertebrates, you don't really have to deal with all that stuff because people have less... people are less worried about like bugs. So, yeah, there's a lot of reasons that it's just easier to work with cockroaches and easier to deal with them. So, that's kind of why.

Lake: Wow. Are you like no longer afraid of any bugs, like after working with cockroaches?

Saintsing: I think it's all about how ready I am to encounter the bug, right? And then you know, like I feel like it's a size thing at a certain point, you know? Like I, you know, if there's like a big spider, and I haven't prepared at all to see it, then yeah, that's going to be shocking. But yeah, I think I'm... I think working with cockroaches has definitely made me appreciate more fully, you know, how anything that's alive is pretty similar to other things that are alive. And that it's just trying to live its life, get the food it needs, reproduce. So, I don't identify with cockroaches. I know some people will say like they identify with their research organism. But I can appreciate that a cockroach wants similar things in life as maybe even you or I do. So yeah.



Lake: Yeah, this is why I love talking with people. You hear all these interesting stories. Like who would have thought like cockroaches?

Saintsing: Yeah. When you do the other interviews like we usually try to give a chance for the person that you're talking to say something. So, you can ask me that, and then maybe I'll just ask it back to you after I say something. So, maybe yeah, let's... you kind of wrap it up and say like, "Well, this has been a lot of fun. Is there anything you'd like to leave us with." And then, I'll think of something to say, and then I'll ask it back to you. And then I'll just do the close out after that.

Lake: All right. Well, this was a lot of fun, getting to know you and also getting to share with listeners a little bit about myself. Yeah, is there anything you wanna leave us with.

Saintsing: I guess you know like what I've learned at Berkeley and what I've learned doing science communication and stuff is just, you know, the... it's a lot of fun to like get outside and talk to people you don't know, people who you probably don't have a lot of overlap with in terms of like experience or interest. But once you start talking to them you realize, like, you can really understand what they're saying and, you know, you have like common... You can find common ground with them. So, anyway that's just to say: Definitely, like, talk to as many people as you can try to learn more about people. Try to like gain from other people's perspectives. That's what I really think The Graduates for me has been all about. So, hopefully, listeners have felt the same way, and they're trying that out in their own life.

Lake: Yeah, I agree. I feel like it's really important to keep your mind and heart open to just all the different people around us and their experiences because you just never know what you'll end up learning and what you'll end up talking about.

Saintsing: Yeah, for sure. Well, I guess that's kind of what you would say if I were giving you the chance to address the audience? Cool, so I guess I'll just take it back for a minute to end out the show. I think you've been a great host, and I'm really interested to hear you interview somebody other than me, so looking forward to that. To the rest of you: Today, you've been hearing from two hosts of The Graduates — me, Andrew Saintsing, who you've heard hopefully a lot over the past four years, and our new host, Daniella Lake, who will be interviewing other graduate students moving forward. Looking forward to it, Daniella.

Lake: Me, too.

Saintsing: All right. Tune in in two weeks for the next episode of The Graduates.